



THE MERCHANT

Before you begin your journey, you will need:

- Backpack with:
 - This worksheet
 - Pen or pencil
 - Snacks
 - Water
 - First Aid kit
 - Bicycle repair kit/air pump
 - Cell phone
- Bicycle
- Bicycle helmet (helmets are required for all youth 16 years of age and younger)

Start off your journey by finding the interpretive panel located between the trail and the parking lot, closest to the road. Read through the information supplied here, as it will help you imagine yourself as a merchant at the turn of the nineteenth century.

As the Northern Central Railway grew, so did the small towns and communities that bordered the railroad. By 1880, the Northern Central Railway was hauling over 1.5 million tons of freight annually, including lumber, grain, agricultural products (like milk), iron ore, cotton products, and more.



If you came from York Road, you passed an old stone structure on Sparks Road, shortly before crossing the steel bridge near the trailhead. This old stone structure was the old Sparks Agricultural High School, built in 1909 as the nation's first agricultural high school. Proponents of agricultural education believed that educating young people in scientific agricultural principles would encourage them to remain on the land, instead of pursuing jobs in cities or factories.

Congratulations! You are a newly graduated senior from the Sparks Agricultural High School, class of 1919. You have spent the past four years learning about specialized practices to enhance your agricultural operation and you are excited to put them to use in order to one day become a successful merchant! Now, what type of farm do you have? Circle one below!

COWS (MILK)

WHEAT

TOMATOES

COTTON

CHICKENS (EGGS)

CORN

Let's begin our ride! Head north on the trail, by crossing the road. Watch for cars! As you continue on your ride, enjoy the scenery around you. Look for the perfect place to establish your farm. Is it flat? Close to the river? Full of trees? Draw your dream farm below:



Before reaching Glencoe, you will pass a large white post with a prominent black “W.” These Whistle Posts were installed to instruct train engineers to repeatedly sound a whistle (on steam locomotives) or air horn (on diesel-electric locomotives) as they approached a road crossing. The whistle pattern was typically two long notes, followed by a short note and another long note. Can you imitate a train whistle as you bike past?

Now that you’ve established your farm, you’ll have to consider how your goods will be transported to consumers. With the Northern Central Railway in your backyard, transportation by train would be ideal! What special things do you have to take into consideration when transporting your materials? Are your goods fragile or perishable? Would wild animals like to eat them? Write your thoughts below, as well as ideas to solve those problems:



Close to the Whistle Post is another marker on the side of the trail! This white post with black numbers painted on each side facing the trail were used to tell the train engineer where they were on the trail. Facing the marker, the mileage on the right side indicates the distance to Sunbury, Pennsylvania and on the left side, the distance to the former site of the railroad’s Calvert Street Station in Baltimore.

How many miles away from Sunbury are you?
How many miles away from Baltimore are you?
If you plan to ship your agricultural products all the way to Sunbury or Baltimore from your farm, are there any other special considerations you must take into account to ensure your product remains fresh for the consumer?

As you continue your ride, consider the expenses that may be associated with your agricultural operation. Also, think about how much money you might make off your products! Once you reach Corbett Road, fill out your ledger below!

[illegible]

Across the road, you'll see the old Corbett General Store. Would you purchase any supplies here for your operation? If so, make sure you add them to your ledger!

Your agricultural operation is running smoothly and you're turning a great profit! You have become a successful retail merchant (someone who sells their products directly to the consumer). Now it's time to turn around and head back to Sparks Bank to deposit your money! Along the way, consider what it would take for you, a successful farmer in Baltimore County, to become successful enough to advance your career into becoming a wholesale merchant (someone who helps other producers sell large quantities of goods to retailers).

As you arrive back at Sparks, write down the ideas you came up with to become a more successful merchant:

EVIDENCE OF THE NCRR

Along the way, you'll pass a red, yellow and black marker on the side of the trail. This is a mileage marker that indicates where you are on the Torrey C. Brown Rail Trail. The Rail Trail begins in Ashland, at mile 0, and ends at the Pennsylvania line, falling just short of 18 miles.



Great job! You have become a very successful young merchant, with a bright future ahead of you!

If you're visiting Sparks on the weekend, the Sparks Bank is now a Nature Center open on Saturdays and Sundays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day. Stop in to view some interpretive displays, meet an animal ambassador, and participate in fun family-friendly nature activities!

Be sure to stamp your passport with the stamp found in the box on the bulletin board back near the Sparks parking lot! The code to open the lock on the box is 1854.

